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AUTHOR Godbey, Gordon C.
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ABSTRACT

Personal reflections on the philosophy of adult education lead one to try to incorporate the incongruences and inconsistencies of life. One sees the concept of "adult" as normative rather than descriptive, and the term refers to the enlargement of awareness that deepens, refines, and transforms information, ideas, and concepts into the personality, or the mind, of the person. The adult educator wrestles with the conflict between the demands of the increasingly complex and interdependent society versus the free-willed, independent individual person. The adult educator tries to increase knowledge and move toward wisdom. He or she sees adult education as inclusive rather than exclusive, as more than a study and practice of mechanics, with beliefs and values of its own. He or she accepts the risks of idealism with a full knowledge of the necessity for compromise. A personal adult education creed states that all human education should be unified without regard to ages of students or politics of institutions. One manifestation of the ideals of adult education is the "imperatives" set forth by the Galaxy Conference on Adult Education, held in Washington, D.C., in 1969. A summary of this creed is that the base and integrity for adult education is service of one's fellow creatures and one's self, which comes from human relations in harmony with the world and its other creatures. (KC)

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AN EDUCATOR'S CREED FOR TODAY

There seems to be something in the mature human being that wants summation, a kind of closing of the ring of understanding. Thinking persons can put off a realization of one's true beliefs only so long without becoming uncomfortable. Novelists and poets have shown us that we pass through various stages in this development. These are not the "passages" of Sheehy or Levinson, nor even of Shakespeare. The connection of wisdom and age may be as reasonable and natural as the connection of puberty and adolescence.

We early go through self-awareness or identification, then the loss of innocence, through the realization of evil - sometimes regrettably close to home. Somewhere along here, thanks to our glandular make-up, sex rears its head, figuratively speaking, and most of us are fascinated by it.

Another awareness which comes to us, often fairly early, is that in order to achieve, and perhaps to survive, we must compromise. To the pure in heart, this comes as a shock; to those of us whose inheritance is low animal cunning, it is taken in stride.

About middle age we usually are aware affectively, as well as cognitively, of our mortality. The years suddenly seem to swim past us ever faster, and we can see an end to this unique consciousness which is ours. This seems connected to the desire to put it all together, to have our house secure. Such feelings should not be regarded as morbid, but natural. And for some, it is the point of regarding more seriously one's

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Gordon C. Godley

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basic beliefs. For those who are better taught and guided, this reviewing of one's beliefs may come earlier, although perhaps it does not come with the intensity of later life.

Here again education comes into play, especially when learning is carried on into adulthood and when it includes more than collecting information and gaining limited skills. One aspect of this middle-years formation of trial balances may be that one's greater knowledge includes a cosmology which is humbling. Once the course was set for modern astronomy by the Polish Nicolaus Copernicus, we have moved to the common belief that we are a small satellite of a smallish star in the suburbs of one constellation, among billions of other solar systems in that constellation, itself one of billions of constellations. But even as this knowledge reduces us to a different perspective, it exalts the creature whose consciousness, feeling, seeking, thinking, and learning have brought us where we are. The andragogue along with others of serious mind cannot but feel that learning and more learning offers our best if not only hope and ultimate satisfaction.

For most of us, our statement of creed and doctrine does not come out in ringing prose, lucid and appealing as epic poetry. It is patched, tentative, and rough; buttressed here, twisted there to make a fit. And few of us feel that we get it right the first few times, hence the tentative nature of it. Neither is it something we should wish to urge on other persons; we feel that they must discover and utter their own statement.

Some adult educators want to nail their theses, Martin Luther style, to the door of the existing cathedrals of education, accusing them of

excess, of wrongheadedness. There is no desire to wreck totally the entire system in which adult education occurs but to re-adjust it closer to our ideals.

At this point it may be well to reiterate that this is the creed of only one adult educator, and that it is tentative. Some elements in it have remained constant for a good many years and are likely to persist; others certainly will change. One persisting element is a strong aversion to injustice. The person who is both innocent of wrongdoing and of evil intent and particularly who is helpless, must not be victimized. Perhaps this grows from real and fancied slights and injustices in childhood and youth, but the residual legacy is an adrenaline-producing reaction to perceived wrongdoing. A second element is that many people who are given to serious thought about serious matters find it hard to break out of that cast and as a result become somber and not very happy. Another concern is that apparently many persons at some point in their older years give up the quest. They no longer are willing to try to help themselves or to solve riddles or deal with uncomfortable conditions. Regarding this, Henry David Thoreau said, "I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavour." In regard to the matter of overseriousness, Geroge Bernard Shaw said, "Man does not cease to play because he grows old. He grows old because he ceases to play." Edward Arlington Robinson, in a brief poem called "CREDO" summarized what may be the feeling experienced by a larger number of persons in adult education:

CREDO

I cannot find my way: there is no star
 In all the shrouded heavens anywhere;
 And there is not a whisper in the air
 Of any living voice but one so far
 That I can hear it only as a bar
 Of lost, imperial music, played when fair
 And angel fingers wove, and unaware,
 Dead leaves to garlands where no roses are.

No, there is not a glimmer, nor a call,
 For one that welcomes, welcomes when he fears,
 The black and awful chaos of the night;
 For through it all - above, beyond it all -
 I know the far-sent message of the years,
 I feel the coming glory of the Light.

This is a statement of hope, of belief in a future, and a good future -
 one of knowing, of understanding, and of surviving after most dangerous
 times ... our times.

Along with other thoughtful persons, adult educators early experience
 the contradictions, anomalies, uncertainties, and conditions that seem
 intolerably wrong. Some of these conditions might be described thus:

A realization of the limitations of the planet
 to produce food, fiber, fuel

vs.

A world population growing with apparent dis-
 regard of these limitations.

. . . .

A continual rise in the number of illiterate
 adults on Earth

vs.

Improved means of communications, greater know-
 ledge of andragogy, and an increased difficulty of
 functioning without literacy and ever greater knowledge.

. . . .

A history of concern over the degradation and
abasement of slavery

vs.

Millions of people forced to live under dictatorial
governments not of their choosing.

. . .

Higher than ever aspirations and expectations
of the world's population

vs.

Continued concentration of wealth and power in
the hands of a small, interlocking group.

. . .

Religion claiming millions of adherents and
establishing political as well as religious hierarchies

vs.

Murderous wars within religions and between religious
groups.

. . .

John Schwertman once talked of our needing lodestars in adult
education, and he spoke to a real need. This is a time of widespread
anomie, or anomia, in which numbers of people are adrift, anxious,
frustrated, lonely. In addition, many are angry at something or someone
they cannot identify, and they often attack persons or property with no
attempt to gain from it, not knowing on whom or what they are venting
their hatred and anger.

In the Winter '80 edition of Adult Education, Allen B. Moore attempted
to provide an instrument to measure anomia, or anomie. (Vol. 30, No. 2,
pp. 82-91) He quoted McClosky and Schaar as saying that "... The core of

the concept is the feeling of moral emptiness."¹ We may be more accurate if we say that there is no feeling at the core - a true state of a-morality. These people feel nothing in regard to their action; no sense of right or wrong.

Such irrational and irresponsible behavior offends the creed of the andragogue, his values, his basic beliefs as a person and an adult educator. It reveals how insufficient education in all its manifestations has been for these people in their need.

Perhaps the essence of the concern is whether anti-social persons have reached the stage of development, or awareness, which properly is called adult. It is reasonable to expect a different form of behavior from adults, *sui generis*, than that of wildly irresponsible persons raging about the countryside, some convinced of the purity of their cause and motives, tolerant of nothing else; some, of course, merely running amok. How foreign they are from the sensitivity expressed in the poem by Robinson quoted earlier. There is no sense of surety and inevitability in the adult spokesman, but rather a hope and belief based on something felt deeply; "I feel the coming glory of the Light."

The creed of the andragogue may be tied to a concept of adulthood very like that of both Peters² and Paterson³.

¹ McClosky, Herbert and J. H. Scharr. "Psychological Dimensions of Anomy." American Sociological Review 30 (1964), 14 40.

² Peters, R. S., Ethics and Education, London, Allen & Unwin, 1966. p. 31 ff.

³ Paterson, R. W. K., Values, Education and the Adult, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1979. Chapter 1.

In this concept of adult, the term is used in a normative sense, rather than a descriptive sense. It speaks to the enlargement of awareness which deepends, refines and transforms information, ideas, concepts into what may be thought of as the personality, or, if you please, the mind of the person. This adultness or adulthood is that required for making judgments of intrinsic cognitive value, and for establishing the moral status of an adult. People who act wildly, brutishly or demonically have forsaken their adulthood, at least for the time. But my own history of inconsistency makes me feel both concern for and kinship with the angry, the hostile, the confused of all ages.

In a figurative sense, the essential adult educator is one who wrestles with God, as did Jacob of Biblical record, and like Jacob, we bear our mark of that combat to the grave, but happily. We wrestle with the conflict between the demands of the increasingly complex and inter-dependent society vs. the free-willed, independent individual person. We struggle through the night with those forces which demand conformity in the name of cost-effectiveness, political harmony, national defense, or what ever. We must struggle even harder with the banality and crassness of much of the conditioning forces of the mass media of communications. Within our own ranks, we, like Canute, try to sweep back the tide of mandatory continuing schooling, which masquerades as education.

In reciting the contemporary woes which beset us, we may fall into the typically American metier of seeing life as "problems", and seeking "once-for-all" solutions. Paul Bergevin¹ apparently saw that such is not

¹Bergevin, Paul. A Philosophy for Adult Education, The Seabury Press, New York, 1967.

the case, but rather that we more often face conditions with which we must live (unless we die). Carlson¹ accused Bergevin of a mealy-mouthed "adjustment theory", but this may be less than fair. Bergevin said, "Adult education could help us greatly if we could be trained to understand that we often have to choose the lesser of two evils. [How happy if only two is the limit!] On this premise we could develop a tentative but functional working relationship."² This may suggest keeping our intellectual and emotional powder dry, and looking for the whites of adversaries' eyes. This is not the way of heroes but then card-carrying cowards have seldom become martyrs.

Our "tentative but functional" position in adult education may be that commented on by Anatol Rapoport in Operational Philosophy³, in which he says that the act of communicating is the basic moral act, and we enter State I by regular participation in appropriate rituals at a common meeting place, thus establishing links with fellow members of the tribe. In State II we acknowledge more abstract symbols which are accepted in common by thousands or millions. At State III we try to maintain communication and cooperation world-wide by basing our exchanges on the similarities in human nature as it encounters the environment. We earn our communication, so to speak, by agreement and sharing and cooperation.

Part of my creed in this context requires that, as an adult educator, I try to grow both affectively and cognitively, increasing knowledge and

¹Carlson, Robert A. "Professionalization of Adult Education: An Historical-Historical Analysis." Adult Education, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, 1977, p. 55

²Bergevin, op cit, p. 108.

³Rapoport, Anatol. Operational Philosophy, International Society for General Semantics. 1969.

moving toward wisdom. It requires an acceptance of the total human family with legitimate claims on survival, in decency, and with the opportunity for growth and happiness. It sees adult education as inclusive rather than exclusive, as more than a study and practice of the mechanics of communication, but with beliefs, values, and concerns of its own. It accepts the risks of idealism with a full knowledge of a necessity of compromise.

We now face a problem of good faith. How can the advocates of adult education, in becoming, or appearing to become, part and parcel of the established educational system, contemplate changing that system, particularly if our changes are of kind rather than of degree? We can, obviously, reach agreement on the inconsequential and keep silent about the things which matter. This is the model set by the United Nations, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and other organizations which accommodate, avoid the sore spots, and, as Hayakawa noted, "... concentrate on the attainment of metaphysical agreement, let the garbage accumulate, and when the accumulation becomes intolerable, move to the suburbs, so that eventually the suburbs become intolerable too."¹

It is an expected stage of andragogical development to begin greater involvement, of risk-taking to attain desired goals, and of running counter to the established patterns when conscience and/or reason seem to dictate such action. In this pattern, we are with such company as Dewey and Freire, and out of step with K. H. Lawson², who justifies adult education on personal grounds, and eschews its use in political and

¹ Hayakawa, S. I. "Adult Education As a Timebinding Process." Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults. 1954. p. 12.

² Lawson, K. H. Philosophical Concepts and Values in Adult Education. Barnes & Humby, Ltd., Nottingham. 1975.

social affairs, especially attempting to bring change. Among other reasons for being quiet and accommodating the system, he suggests that those who rock the boat will lose funding. Having never been conscious of opulence in the affairs of adult education, the risk seems moderate indeed. If our time to rise has come, the risk of losing such funding as we have is a small risk.

In America, adult education has grown up outside of the system which was established for the formal education of children and youth. There are many reasons why this has been the case, but the one which rankle the spirit most is the arrogance of ignorance among those who manage and control that system. Their lack of understanding and imagination about the spirit and potential of learning among those who love it, or who could be lead to love it, has widened the gulf between pedagogues and andragogues. The creed of at least this adult educator involves the combining and unifying of all human education without these divisions based on the age or intellectual level of the learner.

Let us assume that all adult educators believe that humankind is not necessarily fated to destruction, and can change. Further, that change can best be accomplished through education rather than its alternatives; force, threat, seduction, or mysticism. In this position I am with those persons who signed the Humanist Manifesto II.

It may be a good time to review the "Imperatives for Action" of the Galaxy Conference on Adult Education, held in Washington, D.C., December 6-11, 1969. Some of you will take exception to the prefatory statement, before the listing of the "Imperatives". It reads: "For the achievement

of these goals, it is imperative that adult and continuing education be made a vital instrument of national purpose." The humanists may argue that the focus should be on the person, individually, rather than on the nation. But the nation is an aggregate of persons, and if their commonalities are great, the nation can hardly be different. From nations it should be only a small step to the entire world.

The major conditions which hurt, vex, and alarm us are international in scope, and only nations can negotiate about them, but individual persons, in situ, can in numbers prevail.

For all of the Galaxy emphasis on tasks and suggested instrumentalism of adult education in relation to national purpose, they are not too far from Maslow's characterization of the "self-actualizing adult."¹

Let us look at the "Imperatives", and see whether they satisfy our sense of what people need, qua people rather than as instruments of the nation. They are:

1. To prepare each person to understand and cope with the issues of our time.
2. To remedy educational deficiencies.
3. To provide everyone with equal opportunity for meaningful work at decent pay - in preparation, access and advancement.
4. To function more effectively as workers, parents, neighbors, citizens.
5. To improve the quality of our lives - physical and spiritual, individual and social.

¹ Maslow, Abraham, Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper and Row, 1954.

6. To enable us to share meanings, values, purposes and power with ourselves and other peoples, in a world where constructive sharing is the only alternative to mutual destruction.

The people at the Galaxy Conference saw the strengthening of the CAEO* as the most appropriate action they could take to help achieve their goals. Tasks were established, based on the imperatives. These were largely university or college people; 26 out of the total 48 at the Wingspread Conference which preceded the Galaxy, and set up the ideational framework for it, were employed by higher education, and several others closely related to higher education. All were, as would be expected, products of it. Theirs was not an existentialist position regarding human existence as basically absurd or irrational, but more aligned with the Humanist Manifestos, I & II, in which humanity looks to itself for its development, happiness and survival.

Regrettably the Coalition on which the members of Galaxy in 1969 fixed so many hopes is even today a delicate and weak organization, held captive to the individual interests of its member organizations.

Here, then, is creed and dogma for the educator of adults, including, if you will, adults who strive for self-education.

There is order and certainty in the universe, although we are not fully aware of it yet.

Human kind is still evolving, and must live with differences in looks, in values, in practices, but

We must not live any longer than is absolutely necessary with the great differences in the levels of poverty and wealth, of sickness and health, of misery and comfort, of freedom and injustice.

*Coalition of Adult Education Organizations.

There are several ways to obtain the degree of compliance and cooperation necessary for survival and for comfortable life for all; and of these several ways, education is the best.

Education must continue throughout the lifetime of each, but must not become a form of slavery itself; it must be flexible, personal, easy of access, high in quality for persons of all ages, all abilities, all conditions.

No matter what the forces (greed, mythology, personal ambition, religion) which tells us that we should not learn, not study, not search and re-search, adult educators must firmly resist. We must try to use education in these cases, mobilizing for peaceful change, but if physical force is employed to enslave, harm and degrade people, we must not turn away.

The division and diversion created by rigidly separating education for persons of different ages should be eased, since life is gradual and continual and developmental. Petty interests, jealousies, and unfruitful contending for position and advantage among educators must be ended.

Compassion, empathy, sympathy are called for, and a good infusion of wit and humor, for without them, conditions may at times become unbearable.

Robert Blakely, in an address he gave to the second Community Leadership Institute, Bigwin Inn, Canada, 1954, said "Human affairs are guided by leadership, and the spread of liberal adult education can be achieved in particularly enriching way: We can help fulfill ourselves by helping other people fulfill themselves, to fulfill themselves to do what they want to do, what their best selves want to do ..."¹

Isn't that enough?

The base and integrity for adult education in service of one's fellow creatures and one's self comes from human relations in harmony with the world and its other creatures. The kinship of living things

¹ Blakely, Robert J. Adult Education in a Free Society. Guardian Bird Publications. Toronto, 1958.

and systems needs nothing further to reward those who realize it and work harmoniously in it. Our peculiar role and opportunity as educators of adults helps those who give and those who receive.

Gordon C. Godbey
Professor of Adult and
Higher Education